

THE MAN WITH THE GOOD FACE¹

By FRANK LUTHER MOTT

(From *The Midland*)

A SUBWAY express train roared into the Fourteenth Street Station and came to a full stop, and the doors slid open. It was just at the lull of traffic before the rush of the late afternoon, and the cars were only comfortably filled. As the train stopped, a small, unobtrusive man, sitting near one end of the third car, quickly rose from his seat on the side of the car facing the station platform, and peered through the opposite windows. All the way up from Wall Street this little man had sat quietly observing through his deep-set grey eyes every man or woman who had entered or left the car. His figure was slight, and the office pallor that overspread his serious face seemed to give to his eyes a singular intensity of gaze. Now he peered intently out at the people on the Fourteenth Street platform.

Suddenly his eyes dilated; he leaned toward the window, and raised both hands as if to shade his eyes. Then he turned and ran toward the door, which was sliding shut. The little man's face was white as chalk; his eyes were round and blazing with excitement. Against the protests of the guard, he squeezed through the door and made his escape just as the train was beginning to move. Heedless of the commotion he caused, the man dodged wildly across the platform toward a local, which stood there, gongs ringing and doors closing. For all his haste, the little man was too late to enter. He pounded on the glass of one of the closed doors imperiously.

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"Next train," said the guard shortly.¹

"Let me on!" demanded the little man, waving his arms wildly. "Let me on! You have time!"

"Next train," repeated the guard.

The train began to move swiftly. The little man ran alongside, peering in through the windows at something or somebody inside.

"Look out!" called the guard, watching him.

The man, however, paid no attention to the warning. It is strange that he was not hurt as he ran blindly alongside the train. Perilously near the end of the platform he stopped short and put his hand to his head. The train thundered away, its colored rear-lights vanishing far-off in the black tunnel. Oblivious to the interest of the spectators, oblivious to all the hurrying and running and crowding as other trains roared into the underground station, the little man leaned limply against a pillar.

"He's gone!" he muttered to himself. "He's gone!"

For upward of twenty years Mr. James Neal had been a clerk in the offices of Fields, Jones & Houseman on Lower Broadway. Every day of these twenty-odd years, if we except Sundays and holidays, Mr. Neal had spent an hour and a half on subway trains. An hour and a half every day for more than twenty years he had spent in the great underground system of the Interborough. Its ceaseless roar benumbed his senses as he was hurtled from the Bronx, where he had a room, to the Imperial Building, where he worked, and back again. This, as he had often computed, amounted to fifty-eight and a half working days each year, or about two months' time. Such was the fee he paid to Time for the privilege of using other hours for working and living. It had seemed a cruel loss at first — this hour and a half from every working day — but that was in the early days of his experience in the city. Then he had been driven by boundless energy and hope — the same energy and the same hope that had brought him here from his little mid-western community in the first place. Year by year, however, as custom calloused him to the only part in life he seemed fit to play, he forgot about the waste of time in the Interborough cars. Destiny, he said to himself, had hollowed out the

subway as the rut in which his life was ordained to travel; destiny had condemned him inescapably to an underground roar.

He never confessed to anyone that he held the subway as the sign and symbol of the rut into which his life had grown. There was, indeed, nobody to whom he might impart such thoughts as he had about the deeper meanings of life. When Mr. Neal first came to Fields, Jones & Houseman's, timid and green from the country, he had been repelled by the lack of interest in his new problems on the part of his fellow clerks, and he had then put on for the first time that armor of indifference which now clung to him with the familiarity of an accustomed garment. Nor did he feel a greater kinship with the family in the Bronx with which he lodged. They were at pains not to annoy him; he kept apart from them.

Perhaps the pallid little clerk with the large grey eyes would have become very lonesome if he had not eventually found a real interest in life. This, then, was the manner and substance of his finding.

As he traveled back and forth on the subway morning and evening, day in and day out, week after week, he wasted the hours much more completely than most of his fellow travelers. The average subway passenger reads his newspaper and forgets the world; he knows by some sixth sense when the train has arrived at his station, and only then does he look up from his reading. Mr. Neal seldom read newspapers. The blatancy, the crassness of the daily prints revolted him. Perhaps there was another reason, too, which Mr. Neal himself did not realize; perhaps the settled selfishness which his manner of life had fixed upon him had destroyed a natural craving for the so-called "human interest" that is spread over the pages of the journals of the metropolis. He despised the little brawls aired in the papers, the bickerings of politics, the fights and strikes and broils of all humanity reflected in daily mirrors.

Self-deprived of the newspapers, it was natural that he should fall to watching the people on the cars. He got to studying faces. At first he did it unconsciously, and he had probably been analyzing features idly for years

before he discovered and fully realized how extremely interesting this occupation was becoming. One half holiday he went up to the library and read a book on physiognomy, and after that he laid out his course of study carefully, classifying and laying away in his memory the various types of faces that he saw. He pursued his investigations in the detached, careful spirit of the scientist, but as time passed he was absorbingly interested. Every morning and every evening he worked in his laboratory — the subway trains.

He never had to stand up in the cars, for he boarded them, whether at one end of his trip or the other, before they were crowded; but as soon as crowds began to fill up the aisles he always gave up his seat. This naturally gained him repeated credit for courtesy, but the real reason for his apparent gallantry was that he could not see people's faces when he was sitting while others stood in the aisles. But when he hung to a strap and looked at the window in front of him, the blackness outside combined with the bright light of the car to make the glass of the windows an excellent mirror to reflect the faces of those who stood near him.

To classify faces according to nationality was not easy in the polyglot crowds of this East Side line. But Mr. Neal devised many schemes to help him. He watched the papers they read: everybody read papers! He even ventured when greatly curious, to ask a question of the object of his interest, so that the man might reveal his origin. Usually he was rebuffed, but sometimes he was successful. He read all the books on immigrants he could get his hands on. More than once he even followed a rare specimen — shadowed him to his work and there made guarded inquiries. Such investigations had several times made him late to work, so that his chief had made sarcastic remarks. The chief clerk at Fields, Jones & Houseman's was a tall, gaunt, old-young man with a hawk-like nose that carried eyeglasses perched perilously astride it, and he had a tongue that spit caustic. But the chief clerk's ugly words did not annoy Mr. Neal if his inquiry had been successful.

At length he became so skillful that he could separate

the Slavic types into their various nationalities, and he could tell Polish, Lithuanian and Roumanian Jews apart. He could name the provinces from which Italians and Germans came with few errors.

But the most interesting set of categories, according to which he filed away the various faces he saw was that of their ruling passions. There was the scholar, the sport, the miser, the courtesan, the little shopkeeper, the clerk, the housewife, the artist, the brute, the hypocrite, the clergyman, the bar-hound, the gambler. The charm of this classification was that the categories were not mutually exclusive, and permitted infinite variation.

Mr. Neal became as devoted to this fascinating game as ever any enthusiast has been to billiards, golf, baseball or poker. He looked forward all day, while in the midst of the ancient grind of Fields, Jones & Houseman, to the moment when he could establish himself in a position of vantage on a subway car, and get back to his study of faces. All night long he dreamed of faces — faces wise and foolish, good and evil.

Yet more and more the ugliness in the subway faces oppressed Mr. Neal. Sometimes he looked into faces loosened by liquor and saw such an empty foulness looking out at him that he was heartsick. Then he would look at all the faces about him and see sin in manifold guise marking all of them. The sodden eyes of disillusion, the protruding underlip of lust, the flabby wrinkles of dissipation, the vacuous faces of women: it was a heart-breaking picture gallery.

Every face was stamped with the little passion peculiar to it — the mark of its peculiar spirit. The mouths, especially, betrayed the souls within. Somewhere Mr. Neal had once read weird stories of souls seen to escape from the bodies of dying persons, and always they had been seen to issue from the open mouths of the corpses. There was a singular appropriateness in this phenomenon, it seemed to Mr. Neal, for the soul stamped the mouth even before it marked the eyes. Lewd mouths, and cunning mouths, and hateful mouths there were aplenty. Even the mouths of children were old in evil.

"I'm sorry I've learned it," breathed Mr. Neal one

day. "Now I must always look into a man's soul when I look into his face."

It was true. Men who could hide secret sins from bosom friends — even from their wives — were defenseless against this little clerk hanging to a strap — this man with the serious pale face and the large grey eyes who had learned by years of systematic observation to pierce every barrier of reserve.

His study and classification went on for several years before it occurred to him that there was one kind of face that he never saw — one type that he never found in all the Manhattan crowds. When he had first discovered that this face was missing he had called it "the good face," and though he realized the insufficiency of this designation he could not think of a better, and the term stuck. It was not that he never saw faces with good qualities stamped upon them: he sometimes saw faces marked with benevolence, honesty and resolution, for example, and these were all good faces in a way. But they were not what Mr. Neal was looking for — what he searched for more intently with the passing months. He remembered the face of his own mother dimly through the years; it was a little like what he wanted to see here in the subway. He searched for simplicity, for transparent truth, for depth of spirituality, for meek strength and gentle power. But simplicity in the subway? Guileless transparency of any sort? Spirituality? Mockery!

The face he never saw became an obsession with Mr. Neal. He hunted for it in various parts of the city. He tried the Broadway line of the subway where the faces are notably pleasanter, more prosperous, and smugger. But neither there nor about the Universities on Morning-side Heights and on the banks of the Harlem, nor in Brooklyn, nor anywhere he looked, did he find the face he sought. He could always see it when he closed his eyes. At night he dreamed of it continuously — of meeting it on the subway and looking into eyes of ineffable kindness.

It came finally to affect his life — this search for the unseen face. It gradually altered his attitude toward all his subway folk. He came to have a great pity for the ignorant, and pain filled his heart at all the marks of

Cain he saw. He came to have an inexpressible hunger for the sight of spiritual quality lighting the faces of the people of the subway crowds. He did not express his hunger in words, as people do when they want to make a thing definite and tangible. It was perfectly clear and distinct to him when he closed his eyes; then he saw the face.

The time came when Mr. Neal could not sleep of nights for the evil faces that leered at him from every side out of the darkness. It was only when he slept that he could see, in his dreams, the "good face." Finally, he was driven to make a resolution. He would consciously seek for the good faces; evil ones he would pass over quickly. Thenceforward he was happier. As his train roared through the tunnels of night under New York, his eyes dwelt most upon the faces that were marked, however lightly, with the qualities that reached their united culmination in the "good face." He found his old faith in the perfectibility of man renewed, and often he would keep his eyes closed for many minutes together, so that he could see the face of his dreams.

So months went on, and joined together into years.

Then, one day in the subway, with his eyes full open, James Neal suddenly saw the face! He had been going home from work in the evening quite as usual. The express train on which he was riding was about to leave Fourteenth Street Station when a tall man who was about to enter the local train standing at the other side of the station platform turned and looked directly at him. Mr. Neal's heart almost stopped beating. His eyes were blinded, and yet he saw the face so distinctly that he could never forget it. It was just as he had known it would be, and yet gentler and stronger. A moment Mr. Neal stood spellbound. The door of his own car was sliding shut; he leaped toward it, and, as we have already seen, squeezed through and ran toward the other train. Though he was too late to get in, still he could see the face within the moving car. Thinking about it later, as he did very, very often, he realized that he could not tell how the man with the "good face" was dressed; he could see only his face, and that for a moment only, as the local

moved swiftly out of the station. Suddenly he found himself alone and disconsolate.

He went home sick in spirit. As he lay in his bed that night, trying to go to sleep, he said to himself that if ever he should see the face again — and he prayed that he might — no merely physical barriers should keep him from seeking out the rare spirit that animated such features. Ah, but it had been much even to have seen that face; even that had been worth living for. At last he fell asleep peacefully.

The next morning Mr. Neal entered upon a new life. He had seen the face; it had not been a dream after all. He felt young again — not young with the ambition he had once felt so strongly, but glad and cleansed and strengthened by a sure faith in the supremacy of truth and goodness in the world. A happy smile lighted his serious face that morning; a faint flush touched the pallor of his cheeks; and his deep grey eyes were unusually luminous.

Even the roar of the subway did not pull his spirits down, and when he briskly entered the office of Fields, Jones & Houseman, the old-fashioned high desks and stools and all the worn, dingy furniture of the room seemed to the little clerk with the shining face to be strangely new. The chief clerk, sitting at a dusty old roll-top desk in the corner, looked up at Mr. Neal sharply as he entered. The chief clerk always looked up sharply. There was a preternatural leanness about the chief clerk which was accentuated by his sharp hawk's nose, and when he looked up quickly from his position hunched over his desk, his sharp little eyes pierced his subordinate through and through, and his glasses, perched halfway down his nose, trembled from the quickness of his movements.

"Morning!" he said briefly, and dived down again into his work, with his shoulders humped.

But Mr. Neal was more expansive.

"Good morning!" he called, so cheerily that the whole office felt the effect of his good humor.

A young man with a very blond pompadour was just slipping into a worn office coat.

"Well, Mr. Neal!" he exclaimed. "I swear you're getting younger every day!"

Mr. Neal laughed happily as he changed his own coat and climbed upon his familiar stool. His desk neighbor turned and regarded him good-naturedly.

"He'll be running off and getting married pretty soon," prophesied the neighbor, for the benefit of the whole office force.

Mr. Neal laughed again.

"You're judging me by your own case, Bob," he rejoined. Then in a lower tone, "That romance of yours, now — how is it coming?"

That was enough to cause the young man to pour into Mr. Neal's willing ear all the latest developments of Bob's acquaintance with the only girl in the world.

For a long time Mr. Neal lived in daily hope of seeing the face again. He got into the habit of changing to a local at Fourteenth Street because it was at that station he had seen the face before, but he caught not a glimpse of any face resembling the one that he could see at any time he closed his eyes. Yet he was not discouraged. He was happy, because he felt that something big and noble had come into his life — that now he had something to live for. It was only a question of time, he told himself, until he should find the face. It was but a question of time — and he could wait.

So the weeks and months passed by. Mr. Neal never relaxed his search for the face; it had become a part of his life. There was no monotony in his great game. He always found new faces interesting to classify, some unusual combination, some degree of emotional development he had not seen before. But *the* face never.

Until one Saturday half holiday in December. This is the way it happened.

Mr. Neal employed this particular half holiday at Columbus Park. Long ago he had found this park, adjoining Chatham Square and near Chinatown, Mulberry Bend and the Bowery, a great gathering place for the lower types of humanity, and such half holidays as he did not spend at the library studying Lombroso, Darwin, Piderit, Lavater, and other physiognomists, he usually

employed at Columbus Park. Sometimes he wandered over to Hester Street, or up Orchard or some other Ghetto street off Delancey, or, sometimes he spent a few hours in Battery Park or in the tenement district of the lower West Side. On this particular Saturday he found Columbus Park less populous than it had been on his last visit a month before, for many of its habitués had sought warmer climes. The weather was seasonably cold, and Mr. Neal felt really sorry for some of the old, broken-down men and women he saw.

Toward the end of the short December afternoon, he found an old man, shaking with the cold, huddled up on one of the benches of the park. The haggard, unshaven face told the usual story of the derelict, but something in the face — perhaps the abject fear that glowered in the eyes — sounded before he knew it the depths of pity in the little clerk's heart. Mr. Neal tried to talk to him, but there was no ready beggar's tale to be poured into the ears of benevolence; there was only fear of the cold, and of misery, and of death. Yielding suddenly to an impulse so strong that it bore down all thoughts of prudence, Mr. Neal slipped out of his own overcoat and put it about the man's threadbare shoulders, and then hurried off toward the Worth Street Station of the subway.

The wintry breeze chilled him as he hastened along, a slight figure in worn business suit, leaning against the wind, but his heart was warm and light within him. Down he hurried into the subway station, and dropped his tithe of tribute into the multiple maw of the Interborough. The train was thundering in, its colored lights growing momentarily brighter as they came down the black tunnel. The train was crammed to the doors, for it was the rush hour and even down here the trains were crowded. Mr. Neal edged into the nearest door and then squirmed over to a place against the opposite door in the vestibule, where he could see people as they came out.

The train shot again into the dark tunnels. A thousand men and women were being hurtled at terrific thundering speed, by some strange power but half understood, through the black corridors of the night that reigned

under old Manhattan, to some unseen goal. It was magnificent; it was colossal; but it was uncanny. Mr. Neal had always been moved by the romance of the subway, but tonight, in his elevation of spirit, it seemed something of epic quality, full of a strange, unreal grandeur. Faint red lights here and there revealed nothing of the tunnel; they but lent mystery to dimly seen arches and darkling bastions, fleeting by the roaring train.

They stopped a minute at Canal Street, and more people pushed into the overcrowded car, and then the train was off again. The man pushing against Mr. Neal was heavy-jowled as a prize-fighter, but if ever he had followed the ring his fighting days were over now. Good feeding had done for him; he breathed heavily in the fetid atmosphere of the car. He was almost squeezing the breath out of the little man with a heavy red mustache who stood just behind him. The red mustache made the little man's face seem out of proportion; there was not enough of chin to make a proper balance.

At Spring Street two women struggled to get off.

"Let 'em off!" came the familiar admonition of the guard.

Those about the women made every effort to give them room, but at the best they had a hard fight to make their way out. Both the women were modishly dressed, and their complexions were correctly made. There was, too, that hardness about the mouths of both of them that Mr. Neal found in the faces of most of the women he saw — a hardness that even the stress of their effort to get out of the car could not disturb. When they finally got out, others crowded in.

Mr. Neal was happy, and he looked about him to find other happy faces. But they were nowhere to be seen; the faces were stolid, or indifferent, or intent, or vacuous. None of them were glad. If their mouths would only turn up at the corners! Well, it was the same old story. Mouths that turned up at the corners were seldom met with in Mr. Neal's book of subway faces.

Bleecker Street, and a worse jam than ever, but there was encouragement in the thought that Fourteenth Street would soon relieve the pressure. Two girls crowded

on at Bleecker, amid shrill laughter and many smothered exclamations. Their lips were carmined and their eyes bold. Every swerve of the train brought fresh giggles or stifled screams from them.

As the train was slowing down for Astor Place Station an express train passed it, speeding for Fourteenth Street. Mr. Neal turned with an effort (for he was wedged in tightly) and looked through the glass door at the brightly lighted cars as they passed, and then slowly gained upon, his own train. The express was crowded too, with people standing in the aisles, hanging to straps. The faces were very clearly distinguishable in the bright light; and Mr. Neal, strangely excited at this rapid panorama of faces, saw each one distinctly. Suddenly he leaned forward, close to the glass. He saw it! The face! It was there! But it was gone in a moment. It had been like a flash in the dark tunnel. His own train had come to a jarring stop, and the express was only thunder in the distance.

Mr. Neal felt that he must rush out of the car, must get out into the open. But the big prize-fighter still pressed against him, and in a moment they were rushing on again into the darkness.

Now the clerk had no eyes for the occupants of his car. His face was pressed against the glass door. He saw, out there in the darkness, that serenely beautiful face, beatific, transcendent. And even as he looked, he saw again the rear-lights of the express. They were going to overtake it — to pass it again. It had been halted by the block signals of the train ahead, perhaps at any rate it was now moving very slowly. As the local shot by, the panorama of faces was unfolded much more rapidly than it had been before, but Mr. Neal caught a glimpse of the face once more. It looked directly at him, as it had before, and he thought it smiled upon him a little.

The little clerk was greatly excited. As soon as the local had come to a stop at the Fourteenth Street Station and the doors had been opened, he darted out and hurried to the other side of the platform. There he stood leaning out to watch for the approach of the express. In a moment it came, rumbling in quite as usual, mechanically and

regularly, and the doors slid open to allow the flood of people to pour out. Mr. Neal squirmed through the crowd, looking in at the windows and watching the people coming out; but he did not see the face, and, frantic lest he should lose it once more, he crowded into one of the cars again at the last minute. He tried at first to pass through the train searching for the man with the "good face," but the guards rebuffed him, and the usually good-natured crowd was provoked to impatience by his squirming efforts; and he himself soon became so exhausted in his attempt that he gave it up. At Grand Central Station he again hurried out upon the platform to watch the crowds getting off. The gong had begun to ring again when he caught sight of a tall figure mounting a short flight of stairs toward the upper platform, and he immediately knew that there was the man he sought. The face was turned away, yet he thought he could not be mistaken. He rushed toward the stairway, bumping into others so many times in his haste that he really made little speed. When he reached the top of the stairs he looked about. For one heartsick moment he thought he had lost the man after all. Then, away across the station, near one of the exits, he saw the tall figure again. The man was leaving the station, and as he passed out, for a moment he turned his face toward the crowd within; and Mr. Neal knew then that he had not been mistaken.

To the little clerk it seemed an age before he could reach the exit through which the tall figure had passed. He ran around people and dodged and ducked, oblivious of the curious watching of the crowd. At last he gained the exit. The tall man was nowhere to be seen.

Mr. Neal found himself on Forty-Second Street, east of Fourth Avenue. It was night, and the December wind pierced his clothing and cut to his very bones like a knife. He buttoned his sack coat up tightly and turned up the collar. He decided to walk east down Forty-Second Street, in the hope of seeing the face again. He walked very rapidly, impelled both by the desire to keep as warm as possible, and the thought that whatever chance he had of finding the man would be lost if he did not hurry.

As he stood for a moment on the curb before crossing Lexington Avenue, halted by a long string of passing automobiles, he thought he saw the tall man at about the middle of the next block. Taking his life in his hands, he scurried across the street, dodging in and out among the vehicles with the curses of drivers in his ears. But he got across safely, and now he was certain that he had been right: there was the tall figure he could not mistake. Now he gained on the man, who turned south into Third Avenue. As Mr. Neal breathlessly turned the corner he saw the tall man mounting the stoop of a shabby four-story apartment house a little way down the street. About to enter, he turned his face toward the running clerk, and even by the dim light at the entrance to the dingy house, Mr. Neal could see how ineffably spiritual and strong the face was. Joy filled the little clerk's heart so full that tears came to his eyes. At last he was to meet the man with the "good face"—after so long! He managed to find breath to call out.

"I say!" he shouted.

But he was too late, for the door had closed almost before the words left his mouth.

Leaping up the steps, he found that the door was not locked, and he entered a dark hallway. He heard a step on the landing above, and called out again, but there was no answer. He hurried up the creaking stairs, but he was just in time to see the first door on his left closed silently but firmly.

Mr. Neal hesitated. He took off his hat and wiped his forehead, which was damp with perspiration. Then he rang the bell.

The hallway was dimly lighted with one small gas jet over against the discolored wall. Mr. Neal waited. Presently he heard footsteps. Then the door was opened and a flood of warm light poured into the dim little hall. A short, white-bearded old man stood in the doorway. He seemed the very personification of serene happiness, and over his shoulder peered an old lady whose face was lighted by the same kindly joy. There was an atmosphere of quiet goodness about them both; it flooded out into the hallway as sensibly as the glow of light itself. The

old couple looked questioningly at Mr. Neal. The little clerk was somewhat embarrassed.

"I—I wanted to see the gentleman who just came in here," he said.

The white-bearded old man seemed surprised.

"Why, nobody has come in here," he said in a gentle voice. "Not since I came home over an hour ago."

"Oh, the tall man, with — with —"

"But nobody has come in, sir," reiterated the old man.

"Just now, you know," insisted Mr. Neal. "A tall man —"

A shadow crossed the old man's face — a shade of alarm. The woman withdrew a little. Some of the happiness seemed to leave their faces, allowing the wrinkles of age to show themselves.

"I don't know what you mean, sir," the old man said slowly, "but we two are alone here. There is no tall man here, I assure you. Please —"

"But haven't you a lodger?" asked Mr. Neal hopefully. "This was a very tall man; that was the reason I could see him so well in the subway. He has a good face — a really wonderful face —"

Mr. Neal hesitated a moment, realizing that he had been led to reveal his secret to one who might not understand.

Pity came into the old gentleman's eyes.

"Ah," he said, and nodded. "If I could be of any help to you — Would you come in?"

"Didn't he come in here, really? Hasn't a tall man been here?"

"Nobody is here, sir, but us. But if I could do anything for you, I'd be glad to."

Mr. Neal saw that the old gentleman thought he was dealing with a demented man; he saw, too, that the denial was an honest one.

"Thank you," said Mr. Neal. "No. I must be going. I am very sorry I troubled you."

The old man bade him a cheery good-night, but he looked after Mr. Neal in solicitude as the clerk went slowly down the steps.

The air was bitter cold outside, and Mr. Neal realized

for the first time that he did not have his overcoat. He shivered.

Hunching his shoulders up against the blast, he hurried back to the subway.

Heartbreaking though his disappointment was, Mr. Neal was not embittered. There was one thing that he knew now beyond all cavil or doubt: he knew that he should find the man with the good face. He knew that he should eventually meet him somewhere, sometime, and come to know him. How Mr. Neal longed for that time words cannot describe, but his settled faith that his desire would one day be fulfilled kept him tranquil and happy. Why should he be impatient? Perhaps today, or tomorrow — perhaps in this car he was entering, perhaps just around the next corner — he would see the face.

"It will be soon," he would say to himself. "I know it will be soon."

The beggars in front of the Imperial building came to know the little clerk and thank him in advance for his alms. The elevator men and the newsies came to watch for him. Mr. Neal himself took an interest in everybody. He formed the habit of watching crowds wherever they were greatest, partly because thereby his chance of discovering the face was enhanced, and partly because crowds thrilled him. What a tremendous mass of emotions — hopes, fears, ambitions, joys, sorrows — were in these thousand faces swirling about him in ceaseless tide! They were all individuals; that was the wonder of it! All were individuals with personalities of their own, with their own lives to live and their own problems to think out. He would like to help them all.

Mr. Neal at last formed the acquaintance of the members of the family with whom he had lodged so long. One evening just outside his room he met a red-cheeked boy whom he supposed to be the son of his landlord, and it came to him with a shock that he scarcely knew these people under whose roof he had lived for many years. The boy seemed surprised and a little frightened when Mr. Neal tried to talk to him, and the clerk resolved there and then to make amends for past neglect. The very next evening he made an excuse to visit the father of the house-

hold. A fine hearty fellow he found him, sitting in the kitchen with his stockinged feet up on a chair, smoking an old clay pipe and reading the evening paper. Mr. Neal learned he was a hard-working teamster. The man seemed pleased with his lodger's attentions, and invited him to come again, and Mr. Neal did come again and often, for he liked his landlord from the start. There were three children, two of them pictures of health, but the third thin and pale and unable to romp about because of a twisted leg.

Mr. Neal became a veritable member of the household, and when he discovered from a chance remark of the father that they were saving money, penny by penny, to buy a brace for the crooked leg, he insisted on "loaning" the money to make up the balance still lacking.

"Funny thing," commented the teamster one evening. "We used to think you wasn't human exactly." He laughed heartily. "Gotta get acquainted with a guy, ain't you?"

Then his wife, a thin, washed-out little woman, embarrassed the little clerk greatly by saying gravely:

"Mr. Neal, you're a good man."

Her eyes were on the little cripple.

In the same vein was the comment of the office force at Fields, Jones & Houseman's on the occasion of Arnold's injury in the elevator accident, when Mr. Neal took up a collection for the injured man, heading the subscription himself.

"Funny thing," exclaimed the chief clerk to a stenographer as they were leaving the office that afternoon. "Funny thing: when I first came here James Neal was close as a clam; never a word out of him. Paid no attention to anybody, all gloom. Now look at him helping everybody! Best old scout in the office!"

As he nodded his head in emphasis, his eyeglasses trembled on his nose — but they stuck.

"I've not got a better friend in the whole town than James Neal, and I know it," he added, "and I guess that's true of everybody in the office!"

It was true that Mr. Neal and the chief clerk had become fast friends. They had come to spend their

Sundays together, and even to share confidences, and so it was natural that when Mr. Neal saw the face for the third time he should be moved to tell his friend about it. This telling of his secret was epochal in Mr. Neal's life.

The two men sat on a bench in a more or less secluded part of Bronx Park. Mr. Neal looked off among the trees as he told the story of the face hesitatingly, often in difficulty for the right word, the light of the mystic in his glowing eyes. The chief clerk listened attentively, his cane across his knees, his lean face serious. His eyes bored into the very mind of his friend with their keen gaze. When Mr. Neal told of his failure to find the man with the good face in the house on Third Avenue, his friend shook his head definitely.

"No!" he said. "No! I'll tell you what it is: it is what they call a hallucination."

"Oh, no," replied Mr. Neal calmly. "It is real, John. There's no doubt it's real."

The chief clerk shook his head sharply again, and there was a pause.

"I felt I must tell you," resumed Mr. Neal at length, "because I saw him again last night."

His friend looked quickly at the little clerk, who gazed away among the trees, his eyes luminous.

"I saw him in the Pennsylvania subway station, and I followed him out. There was no doubt about it: I saw his face. He went down Eighth Avenue, and I saw him turn in at a door. I wasn't far behind him. The door was right next to a pawnshop. It was unlatched, and I went in. I found myself in a dark hallway, but toward the other end there was light coming from a half opened door. I was excited, John. Tremendously. You see, John, it was the great experience of my life — no wonder I was trembling.

"I stepped quietly back to where the light was, and looked into the room that it came from. What do you think I saw, John? There was a young mother and two fresh-cheeked boys; one of the boys was reading at the table, and the other one sat in a low chair at his mother's knee and she was talking to him — telling him stories, I think. The room was poor, John, but the mother's face!

It was wonderful! It reminded me of my own mother's. There is just one word to describe it, John: it was a Madonna's face — a Madonna of Eighth Avenue!"

Mr. Neal paused and glanced at his friend. The chief clerk said nothing, but dug at the turf with his stick.

"But the tall man was not there," resumed Mr. Neal. "I knocked at the door and asked about him. The woman didn't know; no man was in their rooms, she said. She was a poor widow. She wanted to know how I got in. I could see I was frightening her, so I left, and I could hear the door locked behind me."

The little clerk sighed, and passed his hand over his eyes.

His friend rose suddenly.

"Come," he said. "Let's walk — and talk about something else."

This was but the first of many talks the two clerks had about the face. Mr. Neal's friend became more and more sympathetic toward the quest. One afternoon Mr. Neal detained the chief clerk as he was leaving the office after work. The little clerk's eyes were very serious, and his voice was low as he said:

"John, I know that I am going to find him very soon. I know it."

"How do you know it?" asked the chief clerk. "Something — well — psychic?"

"Oh, no. It's not mysterious. It's just a — a certainty, John. I know I shall find him very, very soon."

"Well, you know —" and the chief clerk looked at Mr. Neal steadily, "you know that I — I should like to know him, too."

Mr. Neal wrung his friend's hand. They went down together in the elevator, and parted. Mr. Neal hurried down into his subway station. There were not many waiting on the platforms. Far down the black tunnels in either direction the little white lights glimmered. The echoing silence of a great cave was in the station. Then suddenly the red and green lights of a train appeared far away; then a rumble and a roar, the doors of the train slid open and Mr. Neal stepped in. All the way home he kept his eyes shut. The hurtling roar, the crush of people growing greater as they approached the great business

sections, the calls of the guards, did not disturb Mr. Neal. He kept his eyes closed so he might see the face.

It was about one o'clock of the next day that the accident occurred of which James Neal was the victim. He had been trying to cross the street in defiance of traffic regulations, and had been struck by a heavily loaded truck and knocked down, with some injury to his skull. He had been taken, unconscious, to St. Cecilia's Hospital.

Little work was done by the clerks of Fields, Jones & Houseman that afternoon. One of the clerks had seen the accident; indeed he had been talking to Mr. Neal just before the latter had rushed into the street. He had seen the little clerk suddenly raise his hand and point across the street.

"I see it! There he is!" Mr. Neal had said in a voice exultant with joy, and then he had dodged into the traffic, reckless of life and limb.

The chief clerk was greatly distressed. He could not work. He would sit with his lank form huddled up in his office chair, gazing fixedly over his eyeglasses at nothing in particular. About two o'clock he bethought himself to look up the family with which Mr. Neal lodged in the telephone directory and to inform them of the accident. The whole office force listened to the conversation over the telephone, and heard the chief's voice break as he told of the seriousness of the injury. Then the chief clerk shut his books sharply, clapped on his street coat and rusty straw hat, and set out for the hospital.

Long before the chief clerk arrived at the hospital, a white-coated doctor, standing momentarily in a doorway of the ward in which Mr. James Neal lay, met a nurse coming out. The doctor's face was such a one as would have delighted Mr. Neal if he had been able to see it. It was a benevolent face. A profound knowledge of the problems of humanity had marked it with depth of understanding, and withal, a kindness and sympathy, that made it worthy a second and a third glance in any company, however distinguished.

"How about the skull fracture?" asked the doctor in a low voice, as the nurse was passing out.

"He is dead," said the nurse.

"When?" asked the doctor.

"Just now. I just left him."

"There was no chance," said the doctor.

The nurse was about to pass on when the doctor detained her.

"That tall man," he said, "who was with him: where has he gone?"

The nurse looked at the doctor in surprise.

"There was no one with him but me," she said.

"Oh, yes," said the doctor. "I saw a man bending over the bed — a very tall man with a remarkable face. I wondered who he could be."

The nurse turned, and with the doctor, looked over toward the bed where the body of James Neal lay.

"That is strange," said the nurse.

"I saw him there," said the doctor, "just as you were leaving the patient; now he is gone."

"Queer! I saw no one," said the nurse, and moved away to attend to other duties.

The doctor walked over to the bed where the body of the little clerk lay.

"It is strange," he mused. "I surely saw him.— The most beautiful face I ever saw."

Then he looked down at what had been James Neal.

"He was very fortunate," said the doctor in a low tone, "to die with a face like that looking into his."

There was a smile on the death-white lips of the little clerk.